

Oral Questions

INQUIRY WHY GOVERNMENT DOES NOT APPOINT MEDIATOR

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, the people of Canada are fed up with this Minister's answers.

Is he waiting—as he did in the letter carrier dispute—for violence to increase on the picket lines and for the people to stir him up before he will appoint a mediator to solve the dispute? He knows he made a goof, a gigantic mistake the last time, why does he want to goof again? Is it because this Tory Government wants to resort to violence to solve disputes, rather than having him assume his responsibility as Minister of Labour and appoint a mediator to prevent disputes?

Hon. Pierre Cadieux (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, in the article from which I quoted a few sentences yesterday, Mr. Parrot felt that this was not the time to appoint a mediator. And I will quote him once more, in case the Hon. Member was not here yesterday.

“The presence of a mediator is useful when both parties involved seriously want to come to an agreement”. And it is not my opinion at this point, Mr. Speaker, that the parties “seriously want to come to an agreement”!

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TRADE

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS—
AMERICANS' INTENTIONS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

According to reports in the United States, the Americans want to reduce the powers of the Canadian Government to establish, as a sovereign country, regulations for regional development programs here, in Canada.

Will the Minister assure Canadians that the Canadian Government will not accept such conditions?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I read a similar statement several weeks ago, and I am sure that the Leader of the New Democratic Party will recall the statement of the negotiator, Ambassador Reisman, to the effect that Canada had to break off negotiations and that Canada found some of the proposals as concerns regional development and other issues unacceptable. That was the Canadian position and it still is.

[English]

AMERICAN PROPOSAL

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, we take that assurance in a positive way. I hope the Government stands by that.

My supplementary question concerns the timetabling of the American proposal. According to news reports confirmed by the Minister today, it was very late last night that, what has been described by a spokesperson for the Prime Minister as a significant proposal, was made by the Americans, literally at the last hour before the termination date this weekend. Does the Minister not believe that the Americans really have us boxed in an interesting corner? They have waited until the very last moment to make a significant proposal and we are now forced to meet their deadline on their terms, in their capital. Is this any way to conduct negotiations that will lead to a good settlement for the people of Canada?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, there would have been no good settlement for the people of Canada if we had walked away from the negotiations and simply let Canada stand exposed to the protectionist pressures that have already taken their toll in Canada and could take a much more serious toll. I am sure all Members of the House are genuine and serious in wanting to have some system that protects the security of existing Canadian jobs and might lead us to a substantial expansion of jobs, opportunities, and markets in this country.

• (1130)

My interpretation of events is the exact opposite of that of the Leader of the New Democratic Party. I suppose that is because I have been closely privy to the negotiations. He could have been, had he accepted our offer for a confidential briefing—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead):—but he declined that offer.

Mr. Nystrom: After the election he will be, Joe.

CANADIAN POSITION

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, considering that I asked the Prime Minister a week ago, following all the concessions Canada has made in the last 18 months, if he could name a single concession the Americans had made—and he could not at that time—I want to ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs today if he does not think the Americans have done it again. The very clever bargainers they are, they have forced Canada to meet their deadline, on their turf, in their capital, during the last 48 hours, and we are saying: “Oh, gee! Wasn't it great? At the last minute they finally made perhaps one concession”. Is that a way to get a good deal for Canada?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): No, Mr. Speaker, that would not be a good way to get a good deal for Canada, and that is not what happened. Look. We know the Americans are tough negotiators. We have known that from the beginning. The question we had to decide was whether or not Canada was going to be afraid of the